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HARFORD COUNTY OFFERS ASSISTANCE TO THOSE FACING FORECLOSURE

(Bel Air, MD - December 16, 2008) - - Harford County Executive David R. Craig is taking action to help curb the number of potential foreclosures facing homeowners in Harford County. The initiative is a joint effort of the Harford County Housing Agency, the Law Department, the Treasury Department and the Department of Community Services.

"During this period of economic turmoil, citizens are looking to government to help them find ways to keep from losing their homes," County Executive Craig stated. "Difficult times require leadership and we are stepping up our efforts to help individuals and families keep their dreams alive and maintain ownership of their homes," the county executive remarked.

The multi-faceted approach includes counseling services by HUD certified counselors with the Harford County Housing Agency. The Housing Agency will work with families to help find solutions and advises them of their rights and obligations. All counseling is private and confidential in nature.

Attorneys with the Harford County Law Department will continue to provide assistance regarding foreclosures to the staff of the Housing Agency. The Law Department will also be working with the Housing Agency to help identify foreclosure scams. Often elderly and distressed families who cannot meet or who have fallen behind in their mortgage payments are the target of predatory scams.

Residents, who may be in danger of losing their homes because they cannot pay their property taxes, will have the opportunity to enroll in a Deferred Tax Program of the Harford County Department of Treasury. This program allows qualified residents to establish a payment schedule with the county. Applications for this initiative will be available in March of 2009.

Additionally, HUD has provided the Department of Housing and Community Development with more than \$26,704,000 to distribute under federal law HR 3221, the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. The Harford County Department of Community Services and the Housing Agency are working together to obtain resources provided under HR 3221 to assist county residents.

"Harford County Government is working hard to support families in need during these difficult times," remarked County Executive Craig. "It is important to remember two things: first, help is available. Secondly, the sooner you contact the Housing Agency, the better chance one has of avoiding foreclosure," Craig stated.

During the first quarter of 2008, Harford County recorded 321 property foreclosure events,

accounting for 2.8% of the total in the State. Additionally, this represented a 13% increase over the 284 recorded property foreclosure events during the fourth quarter of 2007.